

Winter 2016



WISCONSIN DNR

HORICON-SHAW PLANNING GROUP (HSPG)

HSPG Draft Master Plan Executive Summary

The Horicon-Shaw Planning Group (HSPG) includes four properties located in Dodge County in southeast Wisconsin (Map A). There are two Wildlife Areas, Horicon Marsh (11,167 acres) and Shaw Marsh (928 acres). Horicon Marsh contains an embedded State Natural Area, Fourmile Island Rookery. The third property is the Sinissippi Extensive Wildlife Habitat parcel (350 acres), and the fourth property is a very small Fishery parcel known as the Horicon Rough Fish Station (1 acre). In total, these properties comprise 12,446 acres of state protected and managed land.



Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area

Overview of the Draft Master Plan

The HSPG Draft Master Plan describes how these properties will be managed, used, and developed. The plan focuses on maintenance and enhancement of wetlands, especially emergent marsh and sedge meadow, and associated uplands for an array of game and non-game species through habitat management, and protection of a colonial water-bird nesting area through native community management. Recreation management emphasizes the traditional outdoor activi-

ties of hunting, fishing and trapping, a high-quality wildlife conservation education program at Horicon Marsh WA,



and other nature-based recreational pursuits such as hiking and wildlife viewing. The plan also recognizes the importance of working with external partners, including other government agencies

(local, state, and federal) and nonprofit conservation groups, to achieve common goals.

The HSPG Properties

Open wetlands and water are dominant natural features on the HSPG properties. Some of these habitats exist in tracts that are extensive or that are regionally rare or significant. Notably, Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area is part of the greater Horicon Marsh, the largest fresh-water cattail marsh in the United States. The extensive wetlands at Horicon Marsh have been internationally recognized

for their importance to both breeding and migrating birds, especially waterfowl, waterbirds, and shorebirds. The marsh, sedge meadow,



shrub swamp, seasonal mudflat, and adjacent upland grassland habitats of the HSPG properties host a wide diversity of game and nongame wildlife species.

The main recreational uses of the HSPG properties are the traditional outdoor pursuits of hunting, fishing, and trapping. The properties receive heavy hunting use, especially for deer, waterfowl, and pheasant hunting but also for turkey, mourning dove, and small game such as rabbit and squirrel. Trappers pursue primarily muskrat, mink, and raccoon. Horicon WA and Horicon Rough Fish Station offer the best angling opportunities, with both shore fishing and boat access sites. The properties also are used for other outdoor recreation, such as wildlife viewing, hiking, paddling, and cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing.

Outdoor skills class at Horicon Marsh WA



Horicon WA is unique among the four properties in the plan area, being much larger, with more infrastructure, and offering facilities and recreational opportunities that the other properties do not, e.g., hunting and photography blinds, dog training area, designated trails. Horicon WA is well-known as an excellent place for wildlife viewing and nature enjoyment. The Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center is one of WDNR's premier centers for wildlife conservation education.

Land Management Classifications

Management of the properties generally is described by specific land management classifications per NR44 that indicate the primary management objective for different areas within the property. All lands covered under this plan fall into the following land management classifications:

Habitat Management Areas (HMAs) are managed to provide or enhance habitat, whether upland, wetland or aquatic, to support specific species of plants and animals.

Native Community Management Areas (NCMAs) are managed to represent, restore and perpetuate native plant and animal communities, whether upland, wetland or aquatic, and other aspects of native biological diversity.

Recreation Management Areas (RMAs) with Type 3 Setting are managed to provide and maintain land and water areas and facilities for outdoor public recreation and education. The Type 3 Setting provides readily ac-

cessible areas with modest facilities for dispersed recreational uses. The full range of land management activities is permitted.

Special Management Areas (SMAs) are managed to provide and maintain areas and facilities for special uses not included under other land management classifications.



Habitat Management Area

The plan emphasizes habitat management of open wetlands, including emergent and submergent marsh, sedge meadow, and wet prairie, and associated upland grassland and shrub habitats. These habitats support a wide variety of game and non-game wildlife species, including waterfowl, waterbirds, shorebirds, wild turkey, woodcock, pheasant, grassland-nesting songbirds, herptiles, and bats.

Water level manipulation, hydrologic restoration, prescribed fire, and control of woody encroachment and invasive species will maintain and improve habitat for both breeding and migrating birds and for fish. Nest boxes and other artificial structures will enhance reproduction for birds and bats. The plan also supports sustainable management of forested stands, particularly oak, aspen, and bottomland hardwoods, for forest health and wildlife benefit.



Prescribed fire is a common management technique on the HSPG properties

Native Community Management Area

Fourmile Island Rookery State Natural Area, located within Horicon Marsh WA, has been designated as NCMA. This narrow forested island provides nesting habitat for colonial waterbirds such as great blue heron and double-crested cormorant. A seasonal no-entry refuge will be maintained here and nesting habitat may be augmented by artificial nesting structures.

Recreation Management Area, Type 3

The area on Horicon Marsh WA encompassing the Bachhuber, Indermeuhle Island, and Quick's Point hiking trails and Palmatory Street recreational facilities has been classified as a RMA with Type 3 Setting. Existing facilities will be maintained and a new picnic shelter/flush toilet building constructed at Palmatory Street.



Nesting great blue herons



Horicon Marsh Education & Visitor Center

Special Management Area

The area encompassing the Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center has been classified as a SMA. Management will be to maintain and enhance facilities in support of the Center's public services and conservation education mission.



Public Use Management

The traditional uses of hunting, fishing, and trapping are the

primary recreational uses of the HSPG properties, and are the focus of recreation management in the master plan. Deer, waterfowl, and pheasant hunting and wetland furbearer trapping are especially significant draws for users. Management to support these activities consists largely of habitat management, pheasant stocking, maintenance of existing facilities, and maintaining and improving access. New proposals include exploring opportunities to enhance accessible hunting; and modifying existing closed/restricted areas to better reflect current administrative needs, wildlife populations, and recreational uses and to expand hunting opportunity (see Map B-6).

An important secondary recreational focus in the master plan is on other nature-based outdoor activities such as hiking and wildlife viewing and on educational programming, particularly at Horicon Marsh WA. The master

plan supports these activities through maintenance of existing trails and facilities, including the Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center which is home to one of WDNR's premier wildlife conservation education programs. The plan calls for construction of a new picnic shelter/flush-toilet building at Palmatory Street.



Nature education program at Horicon Marsh

External Partnerships

Partnerships are critical to WDNR's work. The Department collaborates with various organizations and local governments to restore and manage wildlife habitat, monitor wildlife populations, control invasive species, and plan, develop, and maintain recreational and educational opportunities and facilities. These partners include the Friends of Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center, Ducks Unlimited, Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, Horicon Marsh Bird Club, Pheasants Forever, and the Rock River Archaeological Society. The HSPG Master Plan acknowledges the importance of these public-private partnerships and calls for continuing collaboration with these and other partners and private landowners to achieve recreational resource management and protection objectives.



WDNR partners with Wisconsin Waterfowl Association for Learn to Hunt events.

Real Estate Action Items

Boundary Modifications: Current state ownership on the HSPG properties is 12,446 acres. The master plan recommends a series of strategic boundary adjustments for these properties, including 656 acres of project boundary expansions, 5 acres of which are already DNR-owned, and 655 acres of boundary contractions. This yields a net boundary contraction of 4 acres. No changes to existing property acquisition goals are being recommended. Proposed boundary modifications seek to achieve the following goals:

- Include land within the boundary that is already DNR-owned.
- Exclude areas with incompatible land uses (chiefly urban development) and parcels currently in agricultural production for which the probability of acquisition is low.
- Improve public access and management efficiency and expand current recreational opportunities .

Land Sale: A 31-acre parcel on Horicon Marsh WA and a 7-acre parcel on Shaw Marsh WA are being proposed for sale. These parcels are small and isolated and are either in a proposed boundary contraction area or outside the current and proposed project boundary. Neither parcel provides significant recreational or habitat value.

Project Boundary Establishment, Re-designation, & Property Naming: The Sinnissippi property was acquired under the Extensive Wildlife Habitat (EWH) program and thus lacks a project boundary. It is larger than many EWH parcels, with ownership in one contiguous block, and is owned and managed as a Wildlife Area. The property also lacks an official name. It is known locally as the Sinnissippi Public Hunting Ground. However, this is not an official designation, referring to an old leasing program, and is not appropriate given that the property is owned in fee title. Therefore, the master plan recommends that a project boundary and acquisition goal exactly matching current ownership be established for the Sinnissippi parcel, that it be re-designated as Wildlife Area, and that the property be named Sinnissippi Wildlife Area.

Real estate action items are shown on Maps B-8, C-6, and D-6.

New Proposals

New Department Proposals

New proposals contained in the master plan include:

- Modifications to closed/restricted areas on Horicon Marsh WA (see Map B-6).
- New picnic shelter/flush-toilet building on Horicon Marsh WA at Palmatory Street.
- Real estate action items (see above).

Horicon Marsh WA Bicycle Trail Request

The Department received a request from proponents of the Gold Star Memorial Trail (GSMT), a non-motorized trail currently under development, to allow bicycle use on portions of existing hiking trails at Horicon Marsh WA as a connection between the HMEVC and the City of Horicon. The Department is willing to accommodate bicycle use on these trails only under certain conditions, due to Department concerns with the request (conflicts with other trail users; safety; wildlife impacts) as well as the property's statutory designation and primary purpose. Necessary conditions address trail routing, acceptable modifications to existing trails, trail standards and maintenance, funding, and the need for agreements between the Department and the GSMT.



Great egrets

Please contact us for additional information!

Visit the Department Web site for plan documents and updates:

<http://dnr.wi.gov>, keyword search “master planning”, then click on “Horicon-Shaw Planning Group”

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